CAMP WHITE
GRENADE II

"Preserving the Past for the Future"

VOLUME 4, NO. 3 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAMP WHITE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION SEPTEMBER 1999

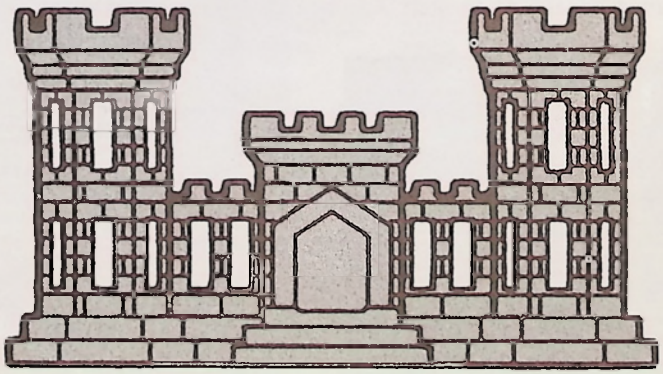
300TH COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION

On March 3rd, 1943 the only thought in Tomme Elliott and Randy Hanes minds was where in the world are we. The 300th Combat Engineer Battalion had just been activated at Camp White. Its members included Tomme and Randy who were both from Texas. Other young men of the unit were from Kansas, Louisiana and Oklahoma. They would undergo their basic training at the Camp and in Eastern Oregon, and eventually embark upon the Queen Mary for the European Theater. Tomme would be assigned to the 276th Combat Engineers and Randy would serve with the 300th as a squad leader, 1st Sergeant and reconnaissance officer .

Both of these veterans recall their stay at Camp White as one that involved competing with the Northerners in the 299th Combat Engineers.

The 300th shared the western portion of the Camp with the 299th. Tomme mentioned that on more than one occasion he encouraged members of his platoon to move a little faster as they would not want to be second to the Yankees of the 299th.

Arriving at Utah Beach in Normandy on June 15, 1944, the unit would suffer 33% casualties during its first six days of combat. By May 7th, 1945, the Battalion would suffer 36% casualties. These losses would include the 300th's commander, Major John Tucker, as well as the interim commander Col. Daniel Spengler.



While at Carentan in June of 1944, the Major became frustrated by the Germans' continual bombardment of the bridge that the engineers were constructing. In an effort to encourage his Battalion to continue to work under hostile fire, Major Tucker moved to the bridge during a German barrage. The officer was killed as a result of his efforts.

The Battalion would continue its work on the bridge under constant mortar, artillery and small arms fire. It would become the first fixed bridge at Carentan and would be named after Major John Tucker

The campaigns in which the 300th participated included Normandy, Rhineland, Central Europe, The Bulge, and Northern France. In

(continued on back page)

Camp White Historical Association is represented in all local parades by the President and his WWII jeep carrying our banner and two American flags.

COMMANDER'S CORNER

Al Inlow

Dear friends and fellow members:

The Association is searching for a copy of History of the 363rd Infantry in World War II, by Ralph E. Strootman. The book would greatly add to the Museum's reference library as a part of its 91st Division history.

If anyone knows where we can obtain a copy please write to me at PO Box 2373, White City, OR 97503.

Al Inlow

AL INLOW, PRESIDENT
Camp White Historical Association and Museum

THE GRENADE II

The *Grenade II* is the official newsletter of the Camp White Historical Association and Museum.

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The Grenade *accepts suggestions and contributions from readers. If you have a story idea or appropriate event to promote, write Carolyn Sharrock at P.O. Box 2373, White City, OR 97503.*

HISTORY ON DISPLAY:
REMEMBERING THE PAST

The following story was submitted by Fernando Gemignani of Florence, Italy. He is one of a group of men who remember the 91st Division each Memorial Day.

"I received a phone call and an invitation from a young man who wanted to share his passion for collecting war relics. Impressed by his great enthusiasm I decided to travel to his home in Montegemoli, an old village that now a days is almost completely deserted. I learned that during the War, American soldiers had placed a number of cannons next to its medieval tower and from that position kept Volterra under fire.

Alessandro, the young man, showed me two shelves where he had on display his various military finds and explained where each had been found. Among other objects, there was a name tag found near Villamagna and six ammunition boxes full of bullets he had recovered from a hole between the village of Saline di Volterra and Mazzolla.

His most important find, however, was a human skeleton he uncovered in the proximity of Montecatini Val di Cecina. It was the body of a German soldier with his helmet interred close by. Alessandro told me this discovery had upset him and that he had immediately reburied the human remains. I scolded him for not reporting the incident to the police."

Above: *Gemignani examines some of the artifacts his friend Alessandro collected in the area near his home.*

Left: *The region where the artifacts were found.*

Right: *World War II memorabilia can still be found in many parts of Europe, As Alessandro's collection proves.*

VOLUNTEER CORNER

Donita and Wayne Robertson

Donita and Wayne Robertson have been volunteers with the Camp White Museum since it first opened in November of 1997. During that time they have missed only one day when their son Brian came home to visit on Mother's Day.

A chance meeting brought Donita and Wayne together. Donita laughs when she describes the incident as a ship board romance. In 1943 they were both working in Portland, Oregon. Wayne was an engineer responsible for testing military tanker ships and Donita was a cutting torch operator (Rosie the Riveter and Donita the Torch). Wayne had just exited the pump room of one of the tankers when Donita met him. Neither describe it as love at first sight but they dated for a year and were married on October 31, 1944.

After the war Wayne worked for first the Howard Cooper Corporation and then Ford Tractor. Donita owned and operated her own beauty shop in Medford until she went to work with Rogue Valley Medical Center in 1979. She left the hospital in 1996.

Wayne did not leave his engineering skills behind after the war He built a 50' metal deep sea fishing boat which his son Brian operated until it was sold in 1986. This was quite a accomplishment—the boat was built of metal plate.

Wayne and Donita live in Jacksonville. They both enjoy their volunteer work and their unique hobby of rebuilding old farm tractors.

OMAHA BEACH • UTAH BEACH • ST. LO • CARENTAN • VIRE • FALAISE GAP • INSIGNY • LIEGE • BATTLE OF THE BULGE • MARTELANGE • BASTOGNE • ORTHEUVILLE • SPA • RUHR • REMAGEN • ROER RIVER • DIEKIRCH • MALMEDY • ST. VITH • NUREMBERG • HOECHST • BEIRUT • PLEIKU • AN KHE • QUI NHON • DAK TO • BEN HET • SAUDI ARABIA • KUWAIT

WORLD WAR II

NORMANDY
NORTHERN FRANCE
CENTRAL EUROPE
ARDENNES
RHINELAND

PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION
CO. C: BELGIAN CITATION

PROVEN PIONEERS

299

COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION

VIETNAM
COUNTEROFFENSIVES:
PHASES I THROUGH VII
VALOROUS UNIT AWARD
CIVIL ACTION HONOR MEDAL

GULF WAR
DESERT STORM
DESERT SHIELD
MERITORIOUS UNIT
COMMENDATION

LINEAGE

1943
ORIGINAL ACTIVATION:
CAMP WHITE,OR
MANEUVERS
FORT LEWIS,WA
FORT PIERCE,FL

1944
CAMP PICKETT,VA
CAMP KILMER,NJ
EMBARKATION, NYC: E.T.O
WALES: CAMP BRAUNTON
ENGLAND: CAMP D-6
D-DAY LANDINGS:
OMAHA, UTAH BEACHES
FRANCE
BELGIUM
LUXEMBOURG
BATTLE OF THE BULGE

1945
GERMANY:
ROER RIVER, REMAGEN
V-E DAY, NUREMBURG
INACTIVATED:
CAMP SHANKS, N.Y.

1947
REACTIVATED:
HEMPSTEAD, NY

1950
INACTIVATED:
HEMPSTEAD, NY

1954
REACTIVATED:
HOECHST, GERMANY

1958
BEIRUT, LEBANON
GERMANY

1963
FORT GORDON, GA

1965 - 1970
SOUTH VIETNAM

1971
INACTIVATED:
FORT LEWIS, WA

1975
REACTIVATED:
FORT SILL, OK

1991
GULF WAR

1992
FORT CARSON, CO
4th INFANTRY DIVISION

1995
FORT HOOD, TX

HISTORY

SINCE ITS INCEPTION THE 299TH ENGINEER BATTALION HAS ACHIEVED A DISTINGUISHED REPUTATION IN PEACE AND IN WAR. THE BATTALION HAS EARNED NUMEROUS BATTLE STREAMERS AND UNIT AWARDS, AND, CURRENTLY, IS AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE ARMY'S DRIVE TO DEVELOP THE FORCES NEEDED TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY.

THE 299TH'S "BAPTISM OF FIRE" CAME IN NORMANDY, WHERE, ON D-DAY, 6 JUNE, 1944, THEY WERE AMONGST THE FIRST ASHORE ON BOTH OMAHA AND UTAH BEACHES. DESPITE HEAVY LOSSES, THE BATTALION CLEARED BEACH OBSTACLES UNDER INTENSE ENEMY FIRE FOR FOLLOW ON INFANTRY FORCES AND RECEIVED THE PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION. THEY THEN PROCEEDED INLAND TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL FIVE EUROPEAN CAMPAIGNS.

FOLLOWING OCCUPATION DUTY IN GERMANY AND A BRIEF TOUR IN LEBANON, THE 299TH WAS ASSIGNED TO SOUTH VIETNAM, WHERE, IN SIX YEARS OF COMBAT, THE BATTALION COMPILED AN OUTSTANDING RECORD, EARNING THE VALOROUS UNIT CITATION.

THE BATTALION WAS AGAIN CALLED TO DUTY DURING THE GULF WAR AND RECEIVED THE MERITORIOUS UNIT COMMENDATION.

JUST AS THE BATTALION'S VETERANS OF WWII, VIETNAM AND THE GULF WAR HAVE MADE HISTORY, THE CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE 299TH, AS PART OF TASK FORCE XXI, ARE HELPING SHAPE THE ARMY'S FUTURE.

THIS PLAQUE WILL PERPETUATE THE 299TH'S SUPERB HISTORY AND WILL LAST AS A FITTING TRIBUTE TO ALL OF THOSE COURAGEOUS ENGINEER SOLDIERS WHO PAID THE ULTIMATE PRICE FOR OUR FREEDOM.

PRESENTED BY ALL THOSE WHO SERVED IN THE 299TH COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION

299

DEDICATED AT THE ARMY ENGINEER MUSEUM, FT. LEONARD WOOD, MO - APRIL, 1999

Some of the personnel attending the dedication were LTC James Dries, Bn Cmdr during the Gulf War; LTC John Peabody, current Bn Cmdr; Charles Hurlbut, plaque designer; WWII 299th veteran James H. Burke, plaque coordinator; WWII veteran Norman Buecker, and WWII veteran COL Cortez Aylor (Ret.), former Bn Cmdr of the 299th. Cost of the plaque was financed by former commanders, current 299th personnel, former WWII veterans, and the very active WWII 299th Reunion Association. Information for these two pages was submitted by James H. Burke.

☆NORMANDY ☆C. EUROPE ☆ARDENNES ☆N. FRANCE ☆RHINELAND
DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATION

299th MEMORIAL DEDICATION

JUNE 6, 1994
50th Anniversary of D-Day
11:00 am
Cayuga County Office Building
West Genesee St., Auburn, N.Y.

IN MEMORIAM

ON D-DAY, JUNE 6, 1944, AS MEMBERS OF THE 299th COMBAT ENGINEER'S ASSAULT BOAT TEAMS, THE FOLLOWING MEN FROM AUBURN, N.Y. AND ADJACENT AREAS, GAVE THEIR LIVES ON THE BEACHES OF NORMANDY IN THE LIBERATION OF EUROPE.

- NICHOLAS V. DeANGELIS
- LEO A. INDELICATO
- JOHN R. SPINELLI
- THOMAS J. PHILLIPS
- CLAUDE D. BROWN, Jr.
- LAWRENCE A. ROBERTS

PRESENTED IN LOVING MEMORY BY THEIR 299th COMRADES AND FRIENDS FROM AUBURN AND SURROUNDING AREA.
JUNE 6, 1994

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 299th MEMORIAL

Fifty years ago, on March 10, 1943, 60 young men left Auburn to serve their country and, as though Fate had decreed it, they were assigned to the same unit - the 299th Combat Engineer Battalion! They trained together, went overseas together and endured the ordeals of WW2 together.

On D-Day, June 6, 1944, as members of the American invasion forces, they faced their greatest challenge - the landings on the beaches of Normandy. They were among the first ashore and suffered heavy casualties; the 299th lost 64 men on that momentous day and many more were wounded.

Among the fatalaties were 6 local men: Nicholas DeAngelis, John Spinelli, Leo Indelicato, Thomas Phillips, Claude Brown and Lawrence Roberts.

The Memorial will honor the memory of these brave men and assure their families and their comrades that they are not forgotten.

PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION

The 299th Engineer Combat Battalion, as part of a special engineer demolition task force, was attached to the 1st U.S. Infantry Division for the assault, with the mission of clearing the beach obstacles within the tidal range of the beach from the vicinity of Vierville-sur-Mer to Colleville, Normandy France.

The Battalion was organized into eight assault demolition teams, four support demolition teams, and a command. Each demolition team was landed in an LCM at 0633, 6 June 1944, and was equipped with a ton of explosives and accessories, all of which were hand carried.

Due to the rising tide, it was necessary to execute the demolition of the outer (seaward) obstacles within 30 minutes of landing. The battalion was equipped with tank dozers, sixty percent of which did not reach the beach in operating condition. The demolition teams worked from 0633 to approximately 1330 under extremely heavy enemy fire and continued to work under intermittent artillery and small arms fire until approximately 1600, 7 June 1944. The operation was further complicated because the infantry and other troops were within danger radius of the obstacle demolition.

The battalion worked with little food or rest until 9 June 1944, suffering approximately thirty-three percent casualties. It was necessary, in at least four instances, for teams to interrupt their work and attack enemy sniper positions in the hills. The mission of the battalion was completed under extremely difficult and hazardous conditions, which required extraordinary heroism and determination on the part of each individual.

The espirit de corps of the 299th Engineer Combat Battalion exhibited in the action is worthy of the highest praise.

Each year on the Friday closest to June 6th, a short prayer service is held at the monument. In addition to the family members of the deceased, many former 299ers attend this service on their way to the annual reunion held in a nearby city.

The original 299th Battalion was activated in March 1943 with over 600 men from upstate New York, thus the reunions are held each year in that area.

300TH COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION *(continued from front page)*

April of 1945, the 300th was transferred to General George Patton's 3rd Army.

As the 300th approached the Rhine River in March of 1945, Randy asked his driver if he was familiar with General John Pershing. His driver replied that he was not. Randy explained that General Pershing was the commander of the American Expeditionary Force during WWI. He also told the young private, that General Pershing had urinated in the Rhine as an affront to the Kaiser. The young lieutenant further explained that he intended to do the same as an affront to Hitler. He commanded his driver to stop. "The Rhine is about 1300 feet wide at Cologne," Randy explained. "I looked across the river, and saw what looked like nine million German soldiers. I thought I might be unobserved, so I proceeded to insult Der Fuehrer. I was about finished with the insulting when bullets started zinging by. I made a mad dash to safety, deciding to button-up later." (Randy was not referring to the doors on his jeep when he mentioned not buttoning-up.) "There were no zippers then. As we made our escape, I hollered, 'Piss on you Adolph', my driver, scared white, said, ' Sir, you're crazy!" Fortunately neither Hanes nor his driver were hurt.

On April 29, 1945, the 300th assisted in the liberation of the Moosberg POW camp. It contained the prisoners from Stalag Luft III which, when the Russians began to move into eastern Germany, had been marched across Germany to the camp at Moosberg. The prisoners were allied officers who had been shot down over Germany. Most felt fortunate they had survived first capture and then the march to Moosberg, which had been made during the German winter. Now, they were afraid that should the Germans refuse to surrender the camp, they might die during a bloody siege.

By 8:1 5 a.m. on the 29th of April, the Camp was in Allied hands. The fighting was concluded in a matter of minutes with the loss of one POW's life. Lt. Hanes recalls the POWs crowding around his jeep and emptying his 30-caliber machine gun in jubilation. In 1961 during a telephone conversation with Bruce Kilmer, a fellow board member of his boys baseball team, Randy would discover that Kilmer was one of those jubilant POWs which Hanes had helped free.

On November 2, 1945, the 300th would be de-activated at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia.

Like many other WWII units, the 300th would eventually become part of the Army Reserve. In April of 1947, the 300th Combat Engineers were re-activated at East St. Louis, Illinois.

CAMP WHITE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
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